Toxic metals in ayurvedic medicines

†2109. SHRI SHREEGOPAL VYAS: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether an allegation of presence of dangerous metals in Indian Ayurvedic Medicines has been levelled in any American magazine;

(b) whether this matter has been investigated, if so, the outcome thereof;

(c) if the said medicines have been found alright after testing whether above allegation has been refuted;

(d) whether aforesaid allegation was applicable on the medicines being exported; and

(e) if the allegation is false whether medicines being used in the country are in accordance to the health standards?

THE MINISTER OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (DR. ANBUMANI RAMADOSS): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) After the incident Government have taken immediate steps to test the samples appearing Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) article from reputed National Accreditation Board of Laboratories (NABL) accredited laboratories. Central Council for Research in Ayurveda and Siddha (CCRAS) has undertaken a study to see the toxicity/safety profile of metal based bhasmas. The study is being carried out in Indian Toxicological Research Centre (ITRC), Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), Lucknow. Pharmacopoeial Laboratory of Indian Medicine (PLIM), Ghaziabad has been directed to procure samples of all the products mentioned in JAMA articles and send them to Indian Institute of Chemical Technology (IICT), Hyderabad for heavy metal analysis by electron spectroscopic chemical analysis as well as X-ray fluorescence spectroscopy. The manufacturers of Ayurvedic medicines have been directed to get safety/toxicity studies carried out for their products by National Accreditation Board of Laboratories/ Good Laboratories Practices (NABL/GLP) accredited laboratories and send their report in respect of acute, sub acute and chronic safety/toxicity drugs studies. After examination it was found that no Indian exported herbal ayurvedic medicine contained toxic heavy metals more than permissible limit. As far as purely herbal Ayurvedic formulations are concerned presence of heavy metals is not detected. As regard herbo-mineral and herbo-metallic preparations, metals are an essential ingredient of these formulations and therefore are bound to be present in these, however, they are permitted to be used only after due purification and only in small quantities to act as catalysts for activation of other herbal ingredients in order to increase the efficacy of the medicines. The metallic preparations in the form of compounds of metals triturated in the form of 'Bhasmas' are rendered safe after purification with herbs and burning in fire for a prescribed number of times.

In an effort to refute the allegation a press release was issued on 2nd September, 2008 with detailed comments of the Department of AYUSH after the publication of the article.

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(d) The aforesaid allegation was made on certain medicines being sold *via* the internet in the U.S.A.

(e) The Ayurvedic medicines which are being used in India are in accordance with the standards specified in Ayurvedic Pharmacopoeia published by the Govt. of India.

Coverage of PHCs in the villages

†2110. SHRI SHREEGOPAL VYAS: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) number of villages in the country which have Primary Health Centres (PHCs);

(b) the plan for providing basic health facilities in rest of the villages;

(c) whether adequate provision has been made in the budget;

(d) the expectations from State Governments and how much are being fulfilled; and

(e) the progress made in respect of assurance for opening of new AIIMS in Raipur, Chhattisgarh?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRIMATI PANABAKA LAKSHMI): (a) to (d) The health centres are opened on the basis of workload/caseload, distance and the following population norms:-

Centre	Population Norms	
	Plain Area	Hilly/Tribal area
Sub-Centre	5000	3000
PHC	30,000	20,000
CHC	1,20,000	80,000

As on March, 2007, number of functional Primary Health Centres (PHCs) is 22,370. The average number of villages covered by a PHC is 29 as on March, 2007. The endeavour of the Government through National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) is to provide accessible, affordable and quality health care to the rural population, especially to the vulnerable section wherein upgradation/ strengthening/ establishment of new Sub-centres, Primary Health Centres and Community Health Centres is an ongoing process depending upon the need on the basis of population, caseload and distance. The need is projected by the State/ UT Governments in their annual Programme Implementation Plan (PIP) that are approved by National Programme Coordination Committee (NPCC) under National Rural Health Mission (NRHM), infrastructure strengthening being the major thrust area under NRHM. Availability of funds has never been a constraint for NRHM.

(e) The following progress has been made for opening of AIIMS like institute at Raipur, Chhattisgarh:

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.